



NEW YORK CITY LANDMARKS PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Robert B. Tierney
Chairman

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BIALYSTOKER CENTER AND HOME FOR THE AGED NAMED A CITY LANDMARK



The Landmarks Preservation Commission today unanimously approved the designation of the Art Deco-style Bialystoker Center and Home for the Aged at 228 East Broadway on Manhattan's Lower East Side as a New York City landmark.

"This is a special building that retains a strong presence to this day, and tells so many stories of the Jewish community in New York City," said Commission Chairman Robert B. Tierney.

Designed by the architect Harry Hurwit and opened in 1931 (photo of opening day celebration below, at right), the nine-story Bialystoker Center and Home for the Aged building is one of the few Art Deco-style structures ever constructed on the Lower East Side. It was built by the Bialystoker Center, an umbrella organization of charitable and cultural associations formed by Jewish immigrants from Bialystok, a town located in a formerly Russian-occupied area that is now part of northeastern Poland, to assist with its recovery after World War I.

From the 1880s to the 1920s, the Lower East Side was home to the largest Jewish community in the world and was the center of Jewish life and culture in the United States. The historic core of the area was at Straus Square, at the intersection of Canal and Essex streets, just west of the landmark building.

In the 1920s, as the need for aid abroad decreased, the Bialystoker Center refocused its efforts on serving New York City's Jewish community by constructing a nursing home with room for 250 residents, a synagogue, auditorium, sun parlors and hospital space.



Prior to an urban renewal project that was completed in 1960, the building, whose rear fronted Division Street, stood in the middle of a crowded block and towered over the adjacent tenements. Hurwit, himself a Jewish immigrant from Eastern Europe, incorporated into the building a series of dramatic setbacks and chamfered corners, in what appeared to be a gesture towards the Art Deco towers under way in Midtown Manhattan.

The buff and yellow brick building's primary decorative element is a cast-stone main entrance enframing, topped by a spandrel inscribed with

the word "BIALYSTOKER" written in letters similar to the Hebrew alphabet. A series of roundels depicting the symbols of the 12 tribes of Israel are and several stylized menorahs are set within the door surround. They depict a mandrake (Reuben), a city gate (Simon), a high priest's breastplate (Levi), a lion (Judah), a camel (Issachar), a ship (Zebulun), a snake (Dan), a stag (Naphtali), tents (Gad), a tree (Asher) a bull and ox (Ephraim and Menashe) and a wolf (Benjamin).

When the Bialystoker Center closed the doors of the nursing home in 2011, it was one of the last remaining and longest-running organizations of its kind in New York City. The building is currently vacant.

In other business, the Commission voted unanimously to hold public hearings on proposals designate 237 buildings in Greenwich Village (between Washington Square South and West Houston and Sixth Avenue and La Guardia Place) as the **South Village Historic District** and the **Hannah M. De Coudres House** at 1090 Greene Ave., the **Catherina Lipsius House** at 670 Bushwick Ave. and the **Ridgewood Masonic Temple** at 1054 Bushwick Ave. in Brooklyn as individual landmarks. Dates for the hearings were not immediately scheduled.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the mayoral agency responsible for protecting and preserving New York City's architecturally, historically and culturally significant buildings and sites. Since its creation in 1965, LPC has granted landmark status to more than 31,000 buildings and sites, including 1,324 individual landmarks, 115 interior landmarks, 10 scenic landmarks, 109 historic districts and 19 historic district extensions in all five boroughs. Under the City's landmarks law, considered among the most powerful in the nation, the Commission must be comprised of at least three architects, a historian, a realtor, a planner or landscape architect, as well as a representative of each borough.

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